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LETTER DATED 23 DECEMBER 1996 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 23 December 1996, which I have received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

I would appreciate your bringing it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI

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Annex

Letter dated 23 December 1996 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1031, I attach the thirteenth and final report on IFOR operations. I would appreciate your making this report available to the UN Security Council.

On 20th December 1996 the IFOR mandate came to an end. In this, my last monthly report on IFOR operations, I think it appropriate to take the opportunity briefly to review the achievements of the last year, and to look ahead to some of the challenges facing the new Stabilization Force (SFOR) authorised by Security Council Resolution 1088.

IFOR's deployment to Bosnia, following the signature of the Peace Agreement and under the authority of UNSC Resolution 1031, marked NATO's first-ever operation out-of-area and its first-ever with non-NATO countries. Both Partnership for Peace (PFP) nations, including Russia, and others played a major part in ensuring its success. IFOR deployed for Operation JOINT ENDEAVOUR over a very short period in the middle of winter. The efficiency with which this took place is a tribute to the commitment and efficiency of all concerned. Sixteen NATO and eighteen non-NATO nations contributed over 60,000 troops and facilities. In the air, more than 300 aircraft were assigned from 11 NATO nations, and over 29,700 sorties were flown. At sea, some 20 ships from 11 NATO nations were routinely involved on a day-to-day basis in the joint NATO/WEU embargo enforcement operation. In addition, there were at any one time up to 10 ships from 5 NATO nations involved in mine counter-measures operations.

Throughout its mandate, IFOR's primary responsibility was to implement the military aspects of the Peace Agreement. With great success, it monitored the cessation of hostilities, ensured the withdrawal from the Zone of Separation of forces and weapons belonging to the former warring factions, and ensured compliance with the requirement to store aircraft, air defence and heavy weapons in IFOR-approved cantonments. In total, IFOR monitored 805 sites throughout Bosnia.

IFOR also contributed substantially to encouraging freedom of movement thanks to its many civil engineering projects. Approximately 2,500 km of roads were opened up, including 64 bridge projects that are planned, operational or underway. In addition, IFOR helped to re-establish Bosnia's railways with the result that, since 13th September, Bosnia has been linked to the rest of Europe by rail. Air operations were restored at a number of airports, and, on the local level, IFOR supported bus lines organized by the UNHCR. Despite these achievements, however, freedom of movement and particularly freedom of return are still being severely hampered by widespread reluctance of each ethnic group to accept the return of refugees belonging to another ethnic group. There have been many cases of forced expulsions and the destruction of homes. Mines also continue to pose a major impediment to achieving greater freedom of movement, and are a great danger to all, whether military or civilian. It is crucial, therefore, that demining takes place as rapidly as possible.

Much assistance was also provided by IFOR to the many international civil agencies and organizations operating within Bosnia. Continuous and close support was provided, in particular, to the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), most notably during the preparation and peaceful conduct of the national and regional elections in September and in the implementation of the Article II confidence and security building measures and the Article IV sub-regional arms control.

IFOR broke the cycle of Spring offensives by the warring parties, and played a major part in bringing peace, albeit a fragile one, to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our gratitude must go to the troops on the ground, to their commanders and to all the nations who have generously contributed to Operation JOINT ENDEAVOUR. Their success over the past year has not been without cost. In the course of the Operation, IFOR suffered a total of 265 casualties, of which 52 were fatal. I am sure that you join me in extending the deepest sympathy to the families of those who have died and to those wounded in the cause of peace. It is a tribute to the professionalism and discipline of the Force that so few casualties were caused by military action.

The conferences in Paris and London on 14th November and 4th and 5th December charted the way forward in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The next stage is to build upon the achievements of the past year: to consolidate peace; to encourage reconciliation and economic, political and social regeneration; and to take the steps needed to restore a multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina to economic health and prosperity and to enable it to take its rightful place in the region and in Europe. This will require a sustained effort in the civil field on the part of the international community and of the leaders and people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

SFOR will be approximately half the size of IFOR. In building on IFOR's achievements, it will concentrate on helping to ensure stability and security during the 18 months of its mission. It will contribute to creating a secure environment that will enable responsibility for maintaining peace to be transferred from military enforcement to political and civil control, with the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina themselves assuming increasing responsibility for the maintenance of peace. A major milestone in consolidating the peace in 1997 will be the conduct of the municipal elections. SFOR will be ready to support these elections within the limits of its mandate and reduced resources. It will also provide selective support, within its more limited capabilities, to civilian agencies.

Much has been achieved in the past year, but much remains to be done. SFOR will implement its mandate as professionally as IFOR and will play its full part in helping to bring lasting peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In submitting this final report on IFOR, I should like to take the opportunity of expressing my personal thanks to you for your personal commitment to our shared cause of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(Signed) Javier SOLANA

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Appendix

Thirteenth Report to the UN Security Council on IFOR Operations

IFOR Operations

1. During December, which was the last month of operation of the multi-national implementation force (IFOR), the force comprised approximately 40,000 personnel deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Contributions came from all the NATO countries and, with Bulgaria joining IFOR on 13th December, from 18 non-NATO countries. With the IFOR mandate coming to an end on 20th December, the number of personnel decreased over the last month of the mandate, as nations continued to transfer their forces out of the theatre. However, IFOR continued to maintain a mission-capable force until the end of its mandate.

2. IFOR air assets continued to provide the capability required to secure the air space, defend and support IFOR ground forces, provide support to civilian agencies within mission capabilities, and monitor compliance with the Peace Agreement. IFOR maritime assets also remained deployed in support of the Operation.

3. IFOR continued to fulfil its primary mission to implement the military tasks of the Peace Agreement. IFOR troops continued to inspect cantonment sites, to confiscate and destroy weapons, and to increase patrolling where necessary in order to counter the risks arising from increased tension in and around the Zone of Separation (ZOS) and the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL). Subject to the fulfilment of this primary mission, IFOR continued to provide support to the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and to the other civilian organizations in theatre.

4. IFOR continued to provide support to the UN Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES) through regular, coordinated close air support training missions over Eastern Slavonia.

Cooperation and Compliance by the Parties

5. The Parties have remained in general overall compliance with the military aspects of the Peace Agreement. However, unauthorized weapons continue to be confiscated, partly as a result of the joint inspections of police stations which were carried out by IFOR and the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF) over the past month. These inspections resulted in the confiscation and destruction of a large number of unauthorized weapons, mainly small arms and ammunition, although numerous mines and light mortars were also discovered. In addition, over the past month, during weapons storage site inspections, discrepancies in inventories were found and various types of undeclared weapons, again mainly small arms, were confiscated, together with ammunition.

6. With respect to the continued presence of unauthorized individuals in the ZOS, IFOR increased patrolling in and around the ZOS. As a result, IFOR

registered only one ZOS violation, during the first two weeks of December, involving 3 unarmed ABiH soldiers.

7. Freedom of Movement (FOM) and Freedom of Return (FOR) continued to give rise for concern, and there was increased tension in the city of Mostar over the reporting period, with Bosnian Croats, mainly criminal gangs, but including elements from the Bosnian Croat Army, evicting a number of Bosniacs from their homes. IFOR warned the Bosnian Croats of the consequences of continuing such evictions. Only 3 illegal checkpoints have been registered over recent weeks; but the population still enjoys very little FOM, as was emphasized during the recent Peace Implementation Council meeting in London. Indeed, IFOR suspects all Parties of continuing to use mobile, fast-moving checkpoints in order to hinder FOM.

8. Minefields continue to pose a very great problem in the theatre. Mine-clearing is one of the major obstacles to economic reconstruction and to FOM and FOR; in the period since the 3rd October, when COMARRC linked minefield lifting with the right to train and move, only 43 minefields have been lifted. It is unlikely now, given the weather, that mine-clearing operations will resume before next Spring. It is currently estimated that only 10-11% of the known minefields have been cleared.

Cooperation with International Organizations

9. IFOR's close cooperation with the international civil organizations in Bosnia continued over the reporting period, with support being provided to the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in its efforts to develop the common institutions and the supporting constitutional framework.

10. As reported above, IFOR continued to cooperate with the IPTF, most recently during the latter's inspection of civilian police stations. IFOR support was also provided to the IPTF in Mostar in monitoring the local police force there.

Transition from IFOR to the Stabilization Force (SFOR)

11. Following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1088 on 12th December, and following consultation with the Non-NATO contributors, the North Atlantic Council approved the Operations Plan (OPLAN) for Operation JOINT GUARD on 16th December 1996. NATO Defence Ministers subsequently authorized SACEUR to send the Activation Order (ACTORD) activating SFOR on 20th December. Transfer of Authority from IFOR to SFOR took place on that date.